WHIRRAKEE

September 2009 Vol. 30 No. 8

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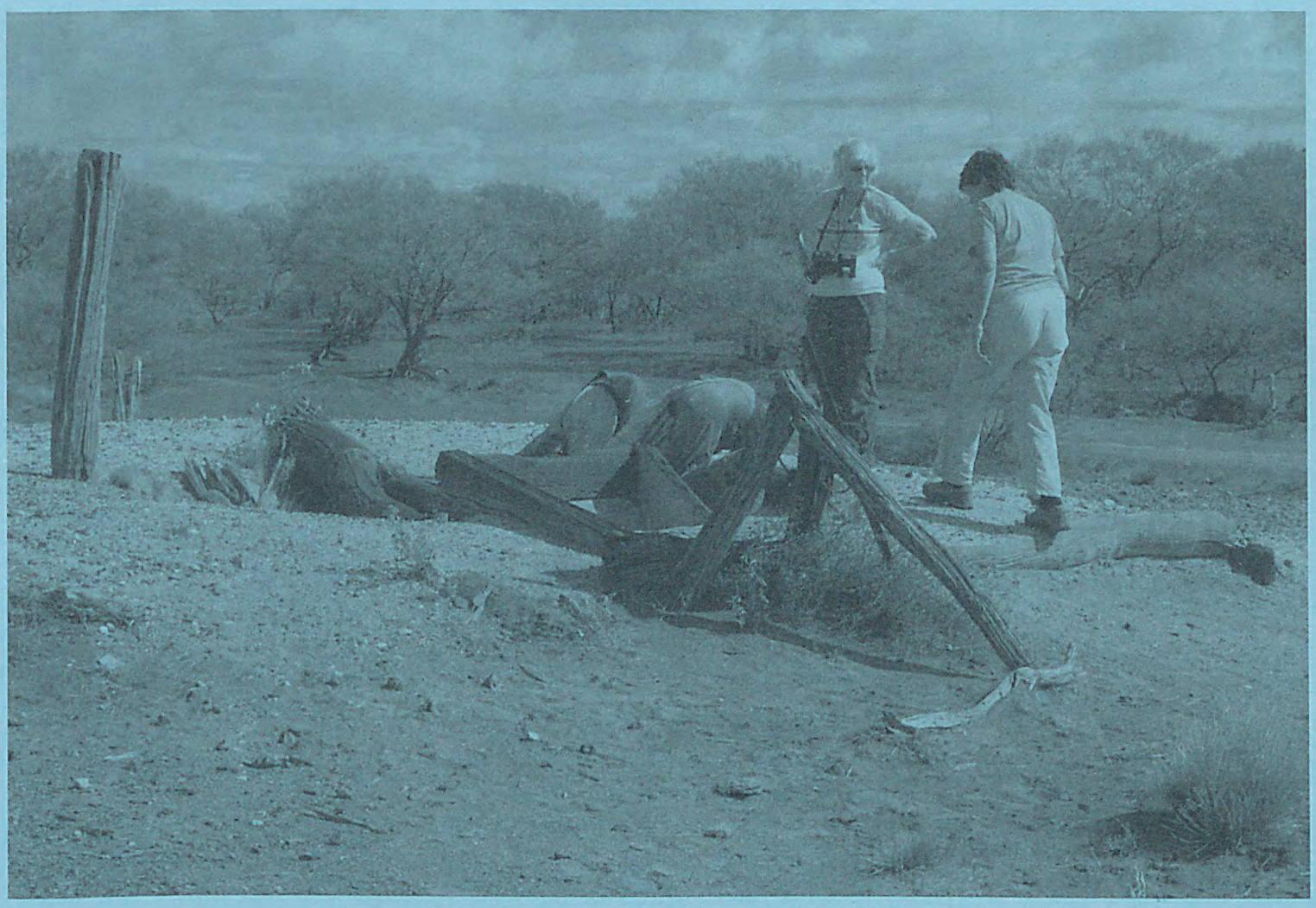

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Bob Ruddick, Ben Goonan, Liz Graham, Diana Collier. *More committee members are urgently sought, see page 3.*

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5449 3479 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 30, No. 8, September 2009
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
Caught in the spirit of spring, I did something really stupid! I picked a sprig of flowering Golden Wattle and put it into the birthday parcel to my sister in Germany (enclosed in a clear plastic chocolate box). When she rang to report the safe arrival of the parcel, I asked whether she could still smell the spring, even though the blossoms would have dried up. She told me that she did not open the box, but had taped it up on arrival (lucky it was see-through), because amongst the dried up flowers and leaves were several crawling grubs about 1cm in length. Ooops, I thought. How easy do introductions happen? I asked my sister to put the box in the freezer, but I am still wondering about where those grubs might have come from and what they might have turned into…(by the way, it is not illegal to send a piece of vegetation to Germany, but still, the principle of the problem is well illustrated). There are more wattle stories in Peter Ellis' article on page 7.
I do hope that many of you will be coming to the September meeting, which is also our AGM.

Front Page Illustration – Photographer: Rod Orr
Six Club members went away on a holiday, travelling down the Canning Stock Route - and this is what they did. Kerrie Norris and Rob Moors are looking for water down the well; Bev Culvenor & Jan Orr are the two upright citizens; Rod took the photo; leaving only our President, Glenise Moors unaccounted for…Some more images of this fantastic environment are shown on page 10.

Short notices

Club members were very sad to hear that Darren Green lost his battle with cancer in early August. Even from Queensland, Darren kept a close connection with the club and made valuable contributions to the *Whirrakee*. His work on the reptiles around Bendigo will culminate in the next club booklet. At the August general meeting, Glenise Moors announced that this is nearly ready for publication. The photo below shows Darren doing what he loved most, and that will be how we remember him.

Garden Working Bee

A garden working bee has been organized for Saturday 5th September at 9am, to deal with some more of the winter weeds. For the next few months, some regular working bees are required for general maintenance and to keep ahead of the weeds. Generally they will take place on the first Saturday of the month.

Working bees usually go for a couple of hours (including a cuppa), though people are welcome to give whatever time they can and if they could bring gloves, secateurs, handweeding tools etc. that would be helpful. I usually bring bags and a ute to put the weeds in.

Matt Comer

More Committee members needed

If willing to participate in the running of the Club, please contact Anne Bridley (5449 3479) or Glenise Moors (54396254) for more information. Even better, just come along to the upcoming AGM and nominate for a position, or, as assistant for a position. Especially younger members are encouraged to get a bit involved. Lost of help will be provided.

Australasian Ornithological Conference

The 2009 Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC), is to be held in Armidale, NSW, between 29 November and 4 December. There will be four days of spoken presentations - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday with excursions on Wednesday. The keynote speaker is the former Director of the British Trust for Ornithology, Dr Jeremy Greenwood CBE, from the University of Birmingham's Centre for Ornithology. Early bird registration ends 1 September. To express an interest in presenting a paper at the AOC, or to register, go to http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/aoc; submissions must be lodged by 31 August, and the last date for registration is 31 October.

A Tale of Two Honey Possums

For the August meeting, Bill Holsworth brought in a copy of 'A Tale of Two Honey Possums' by Felicity Bradshaw. This is a factually well-researched picture book, which is absolutely beautifully illustrated (by Patricia Negus) and suitable for young children. If Bill gets at least ten buyers, he will put in an order. Contact Bill on 5443 4063, if you are interested. The cost of the book will be about 30 dollars.

Community Grants are now open for Applications

The City Of Greater Bendigo provides a grants program to support community strengthening activities and initiatives.
There will be **ONE ROUND** of grants only for the 2009/2010 financial year.

Applications opened 3 August 2009 and **close September 11, 2009** for projects starting mid December 2009. Grants will be made available in the following categories:

Community Assistance

To assist groups to undertake a wide range of activities that contribute to strengthening the community and create new opportunities for community participation in social, learning and civic activities.

Environmental Sustainability

To assist groups to undertake a range of projects which will help protect and restore our natural environment, including projects that build community capacity, appreciation and knowledge.

Cultural

To support the development of arts and cultural initiatives that engage the broader community in arts/cultural-related activities.

Community Events

To assist groups to develop and implement community events that are innovative, creative celebrations of community, encourage community participation, and build local partnerships and networks.

Recreation

These grants are aimed at assisting all recreation and sporting groups with funding for recreation based programs, activities and facility development.

Application kits are available from the City Of Greater Bendigo Municipal Offices in Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo, City of Greater Bendigo Heathcote office, Main Street, Heathcote or on line www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/grants

Closing date is 5pm, Friday 11 September, 2009.

For further information, contact the following people:

General Community Grant enquiries, 'Community Events' and 'Community Assistance Grants': Jeanice Henderson 54346463.

'Environment Sustainability Grants':
Anthony Sheean 5434 6374

'Cultural Grants': Rohan Phillips 54346478

'Recreation Grants': Rhiannon Chandler 5434 6395.

August Observations

recorded by Jan Orr

The BFNC members were excited by the flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos that have arrived in Bendigo recently. These birds usually inhabit the wetter forests and *Pinus radiata* plantations to the south and east, therefore it is unusual to see them in our Box Iron-bark forests.

John Robinson

The first Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo report for the Bendigo he heard about, was an isolated report in November 2008. These recent sightings are doubly unusual because of the large numbers of birds involved and the length of their stay. The birds are feeding on the pine seeds of the numerous *Pinus* species that are growing in parks and gardens throughout the city, however, recently the birds have been seen eating/feeding on the seeds of Blue-gums and Hakeas.

Is it hunger that has forced these birds to extend their range to Bendigo? If so, are the February bushfires connected to this food shortage?

Anne Bridley and Glenise Moors

On 11.8.2009, 5 Yellow-tailed Black Tailed Cockatoos were observed flying across the Moffatt's Lane - Ford Rd. area at Sedgwick.

Elaine Doling

On the 5.8.2009 at Victoria Hill at about lunchtime 3 flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew in from different directions to form a flock of about 50 or more birds while flying and tumbling about.

On the same day a person from Kangaroo Flat said a large flock of 50 or more had stripped a pine tree at his place.

Two weeks ago, Elaine heard, but didn't see, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at California Gully oval (6 Green St)

Jane Cleary

Observations from her garden at Epsom

- In June she saw a Olive-backed Oriole.
- August 2nd, 8th and 10th Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos visited her garden.
- August 3rd the 1st call of the Striated Pardalote announcing an early spring was heard.
- Red-rumped Parrots and Eastern Rosellas were seen at the nest boxes.
- The Eastern Rosellas were feeding on the White Cedar fruits, which are supposed to contain harmful toxins, but the rosellas don't appear to be adversely effected by them.
- August 4th a Darter was seen at Lake Weeroona.
- During the 1st week of July at Carwarp in NW Victoria she saw Major Mitchell Cockatoos (Pink Cockatoos). She also observed Apostle-birds nest building.

Pam and John Land

A Gilberts Whistler was observed at Neilborough recently, after an absence of several years.

Similarly, a pair of Painted Button Quail have been recently seen at Neilborough. The last sighting of these birds was 2 and a half years ago.

Joy Clusker

Her husband Ian, saw a White-bellied Sea Eagle, beside the road at Eddington, 5 weeks ago. According to a local, they nest at Tullaroop Dam.

August General Meeting, speaker Sean Dooley 'The Big Twitch'

by Sabine Wilkens

'The Big Twitch' is the title of an amazing book and the story for this book began in 1979, when Sean was just a little boy, displaying distinct signs of 'birdie-nerdie symptom'. His interest in bird watching escalated, when he saw a rare bird (a Glossy Ibis), near his school ground at Seaforth, where he regularly did a wetland watch. It reached dangerous levels when he was a youth and culminated in a lap around Australia during which he broke the record of birds observed in a single year. Since then, Sean said that his bird watching days are on the decline because of life changes. He did not seem sad about this, as what he chose to do instead is fulfilling him now. 'That's life' he said…but back to the big twitch.

Sean read about the record of birds observed by Roy Wheeler in the 70s, when he was 11 years old, and decided then that he was going to break it one day. The record then stood at 589 species. In 1989, a new record of 637 species, was established by an Englishman. These observations did not, however, extend to the off-shore islands, so the question for Sean was, how many species are there all up in total in all of Australia (including islands)? The number is quite variable from year to year but 715 seemed a reasonable guess with 550 of those being residents, 130 migrants and the rest being made up of accidental blow-ins. After some sensible discussions and re-assessment (e.g. one of the birds counted was actually extinct and Sean had already missed the boat to Macquarie Island for that summer), he settled on 705 and announced that he would be able to spot 700 in one year, a bold and seemingly impossible task.

And so began his trip across Australia. Sean told us some of the highlights and lowlights of being on such a quest and illustrated it with images of the birds in questions. Having to see practically all of Australia's birds does represent a challenge when it comes to those very rare ones and Lady Luck seemed to have accompanied Sean for most of the journey. The Letterwing Kite, for example is exceedingly rare, but Sean came across 106 of them, all roosting in a very rare wattle at the edge of the Simpson Desert. Yes, and he did see the Plains Wanderer too. Feral birds were included on the list and finding a turkey took some time. For certain birds, Sean had to go to off-shore islands, and for some, right to the edge of the continental shelf. Lucky he had a good travelling constitution, as otherwise the

mixture of shark liver (used to attract such birds) and the rough seas are a powerful recipe for not having fun. Birds don't normally have a good sense of smell, but these sea birds seem to be different in this respect, more like vultures. Altogether, Sean had to make 15 of the trips to the edge of the shelf. I bet before some of them he thought 'why?', but in retrospect they were all worthwhile.

By a strange turn of historical events, Christmas Island is part of Australian territory and because of its geographical position (far away from Australia and close to Indonesia), its inclusion has swelled the list of 'Australian birds' considerably. Many birds found there are vagrants or lost souls that have taken a wrong turn somewhere. Since bird watchers have gone to Christmas Island, the list of Australian birds has increased by 30-40 species (e,g, White-tailed Tropic Bird, Christmas Island Hawk Owl, White Wagtail). Sean even thought he has spotted a Bittern and waited cramped and motionless for the light to change from complete darkness to a level where a positive identification was possible. Unfortunately, the bird, a bittern-shaped stick remained a stick, even after the sun came up.

Not only do you need a strong sea-going stomach to be a bird watcher, you also need a strong stomach on land. One of the havens for bird watching on Christmas Island is the local garbage tip, where piles of chicken carcasses decompose in the tropical air, smelling putrid and attracting millions of flies. Sean said the only time he actually saw a surprised look on a bird's face was when a fly went down its throat accidentally.

Another island on the list was Norfolk Island, where several expected endemics (e.g. a gerygone) as well as certain seabirds were to be found. The hire car man could not believe his eyes, when he checked the odometer. It 3 days, on this 8 x 5 mile island, Sean had done 300km. The Red-crowned parakeet proved a particular challenge there. This bird was close to extinction and has come back through a massive conservation effort, but it still eluded Sean for the time he was there. He had already given up, was already at the airport with the plane leaving in about 25 minutes. Why waste 25 minutes? He decided to give it one more go, hopped back in the (already returned) hire car and raced to a spot where the birds were supposed to be...and this time they were there. He just managed to catch the plane, but the heart rate would have been up!

One of the crazy things about being a super-keen birdwatcher is that you hear a report of a rare bird somewhere in the country and you drop everything in order to get a sighting. Even though Sean was actually bird watching the entire time, he crossed the continent several times unexpectedly. For example he was in Broome and got a call from north of Cairns, and just flew there. He was on the edge of the desert in the Northern Territory and got a call form Adelaide and just drove there.

So some birds costs lost of money in order to see them, others cost lots of effort (eg. Rufous Scrub Bird), while others, in turn, cost lots of patience.

By July 30, Sean was up to number 500. At the start of September, he was up to 600. The Mallee Fowl in South Australia was number 623 and the Inland Dotterel up the Birdsville Track number 635.

The Rock Parrot, was number 633 and Sean had equalled the record. The record breaker was reported on Albatross Island, the Lesser Noddy, but to see that Sean had to hire a plane and watch it from the air!

Number 640 was the Blue and White Flycatcher, a first sighting for Australia, and the Gouldian Finch was number 673. The Bush Hen was number 698 and the red-necked Crake (rail) was number 699. Sean got a wonderful Christmas present with seeing the Blue-faced Parrot Finch on the 24th December, number 700, Hurray!!
But he didn't stop there. The Red-Rumped Swallow and Masked Owl followed and

finally, the Bittern showed itself near Brisbane as number 703.

What a journey.

One of the questions from the audience was whether Sean had a picture of every bird he had seen. The answer was no, because sometimes the camera was just too far away (like that time Sean was sitting in the dunes and a rare Ayrian Grass Wren just hopped by. However, he said, that before ticking a bird off his list, he needed to 'experience' the bird and this means not just seeing a fleeting movement (this also means that hearing alone does not count). Often also, he had other bird watchers there to verify his story.

Since this adventure, Sean has been broke but happy; he has started a family and has written the book about the trip, as well as two more books. He calls himself a semi-reformed twitcher, but those tendencies are probably in the blood and pretty hard to shake.

During this one year, Sean took in all of the favourite holiday destination that I am dreaming of. But he wasn't there on a holiday and was probably walking around with a single goal in mind. I am sure this trip has meant so much more than ticking off the bird list. Seeing all those parts of Australia, even though only very briefly or from a single perspective, will be a lasting memory that might take many years to come to the surface once the bird stories have faded away a bit.

This was a fantastic talk and I felt sorry for everybody who missed it. Well, you'll just have to get the book.

How many Wattles in Peter Ellis' Garden?

Somebody asks this question the other day and here is Peter's amazingly long answer with some extra information on localities. Can anyone beat that, or does anyone have extra species in their garden? Peter has also included some interesting facts and trivia about wattles, just right for this time of year.

The List

1. Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha* (Australia's floral emblem. All States etc W.A. I think)

2. Granite Wattle *Acacia paucijuga* (Sedgwick Springs, Mt Korong etc)

3. Spreading Wattle *Acacia genistifolia* (two forms, local cream and Heathcote yellow),

4. Bent leaf Wattle *Acacia flexifolia* (Whipstick) (this is one of the few that keeps as a cut flower in water)

5. Woolly Wattle *Acacia lanigera* (Kangaroo Gully, Diamond Hill back off through to Halliday's Road, & back of Spring Gully Res. (Boronia patch))

6. Ovens Wattle *Acacia pravissima* (prostrate form) Oven's River area near Wangaratta, I think

7. Wyalong Wattle *Acacia cardiophylla* (normal form and prostrate form) Wyalong NSW

8. Mudgee Wattle or Sunshine Wattle *Acacia spectablis* (Mudgee NSW)

9. Whirrakee Wattle *Acacia williamsoni* (Whipstick & Fosterville Rd just past Ascott & Seven Sisters)

10. Drummond's Wattle *Acacia drummondi* W.A.

11. Willow Wattle *Acacia salicina* (Kamarooka)

12. Coast Wattle *Acacia lasiocarpa* W.A.

13. Gold Dust Wattle *Acacia acinacea*

14. Mystery Wattle *Acacia difformis* (Kamarooka Forest)

15. Weeping Myall *Acacia pendula*. Riverina area on NSW side, e.g. Deniliquin

16. Bright Sedge Wattle *Acacia squamata* W.A.

17. 'Nealie' *Acacia rigens*, Mallee and Wimmera, as close as Wedderburn

18. Mt. Morgan Wattle or Queensland Silver Wattle *Acacia podalyriifolia*

19. Clay Wattle *Acacia glaucoptera* (this is one of 3 W.A. species where the phyllodes (flattened stems acting as leaves) grow right up and sideways off the stem.

20. Acacia aphylla (no common name, its phyllodes are big spikes, almost prickles)

21. Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) prostrate form
So, 21 species!

In addition to this, there is Cootamundra Wattle, *Acacia baileyana* on the vacant block.
I had Wychitella Wattle (form of *Acacia calamifolia* or possibly a separate species *Acacia euthycarpa*) for many years, but it died about 3 years back.
Also the local Ausfeld's Wattle *Acaciaa ausfeldi* died this year, there are a few plants (natural) around Race St. next street down.
Also the red form of *Acacia leprosa* (Leper or Cinnamon Wattle) didn't survive, needs too much water, native of Sherbrooke.
Creeping Wattle *Acacia aculeatissima* and Cedar Wattle (*Acacia elata* or *A. terminalis*), didn't survive the drought.

Some wattle facts and trivia....

To explain the use of the term 'phyllode' above. All wattles when they germinate have a pinnate (fern like) leaf. Some, like Cootamundra Wattle and Black Wattle, maintain this true leaf as an adult tree. Many others only have the fern like leaf, often only two or three as a seedling, then the leaves change into what are called 'phyllodes' which is a flattened stem adaptation that assumes the photosynthesis role of the leaf, but is a water saving measure to survive our dry climate. Those with phyllodes have various types of 'leaf adaptation', prickles or just elongated flattened 'leaves'. Whirrakee Wattle is one example, but most of the local wattles have phyllodes in fact, except the late black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii* or *A. mollisima*) that grows along the creeks and flats such as Retreat Rd. Sedgwick etc. and the Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata* also around Sedwick and Mandurang) and the Granite Wattle (*Acacia paucijuga*).

The third type consist of only 3 species in W.A., also phyllodes, but grow either side and all the way up the stem to the shoots.

Wattles, unlike Eucalypts are fire retardant, no essential oils to speak of, and safe to grow in 'bushland gardens'. They have the advantage of often flowering in winter and early spring to brighten up the landscape, overseas visitors are usually stunned when they see them in flower in mass.

Wattles are often blamed for hay fever, but the pollen is heavy and falls to the ground, the real culprits are usually the grasses that have a light air-borne pollen. Needless to say a super sensitive hay fever or asthmatic person should probably keep their distance.

They are very quick growing and for that reason are often short lived, but self-seed readily. Wattle seeds last for at least sixty years in the soil, being encased in an extremely hard shell. Bushfires cause the shells to crack, which is why wattles tend to come up in mass as the first colonisers after fire. Their short life is often due to other factors such as attack from grubs or borers; some like the Weeping Myall, a beautiful tree will live a very good age and the Cootamundras and Black Wattles at least 30-40 years. The early black wattle or 'green wattle' (*Acacia decurrens*) from Queensland is another beautiful tree, but like the Cootamundra Wattle has the potential to become an environmental weed as they can keep cropping up from seed for decades and as mature plants shade and crowd out as well as compete for nutrients and moisture, the

local understory species and terrestrial orchids.

Wattles are members of the legume family and as a kid I used to peel open the Cootamundra pods and chew the seeds, just a raw pea taste. This on the way to and from Quarry Hill School on 'Hyett's Hill'. The other thing we used to do as kids was chew the gum that had set from the sap that oozed out of the stems of the Golden Wattle at what is now the Ken Wust oval. The Golden Wattle whilst really attractive if flower is one that is very susceptible to grubs and borers, and when it dies the trunk and stems set mulga hard.

Although short lived, wattles actually have a function of helping break up the hard clay and rocky soils by leaving behind their 'tap roots', which provide some sort of footing for water penetration and for the roots of other plants to monopolise a foothold.

The pollen laden wattle balls (sometimes rods like *A. drummondi*) are a source of attraction for numerous insects and in turn the birds that feed on them. Also some like the Golden Wattle have a gland, a little 'pimple' you'll find part way down the outside edge of the phyllode, which exudes a drop of nectar *(I thought ALL wattles had these glands, the so-called extra-floral notaries...ed.)* You'll see the Wattle Birds and other honeyeaters sourcing these out.
Wattle birds don't get their name from any association with the plants by the way, it's the two skin flaps the dangle around just on the throat below the eye. Thus in the case of the Yellow Wattle Birds locally, these two skin flaps are yellow. Of course the Irish species have green wattles. Then of course there's 'Wattle and Daub' huts, but the Wattle for making these wasn't actually an *Acacia*, at least round Sydney, but might have been elsewhere. It's a closely related species, *Callistoma serritifolia.*
The technique of course for making these huts out of slats and mud is ancient, but somehow the term wattle comes into it and perhaps an old name applied by the settlers to the new plants they used on arrival here, *Callistoma* being the common one and then somehow transferred to the Acacias, which probably followed in application as the population moved beyond Sydney.
The word 'wattle' comes from the middle and old English 'wattel' referring to a hurdle or stakes intertwined with twigs or branches used as fencing, etc. OE. watul, of uncert. orig.

The nursery trade have developed prostrate ground forms of some of the otherwise tree species such as Cootamundra, Silver, Ovens and Wyalong wattles. These are quite attractive and even sensational

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Register of Special Places
(I reckon Peter Ellis' garden would qualify)

The VNPA Small Parks Project is currently seeking submissions from environment groups that may have a special area of land they would like to see investigated for inclusion in the Register of Special Places. This area of land may be proposed for either improved management or for inclusion in the reserve system or both. Each site will be assessed for inclusion in the short-listed 'Register' using certain criteria (available from the editor)

If you have a special area in mind that you would like to be considered for inclusion in the Register of Special Places or would like to discuss your idea, please contact Yasmin Kelsall 9341 6507 yasmink@vnpa.org.au.

Speakers for the general meetings for the remainder of 2009:

October 14, David Cantrill:
'Charles Darwin – 150 year anniversary of the origins of species'

November 11, Eris O'Brien:
'Native locusts in native grassland'

December 9, Christmas Dinner – speaker to be confirmed

More impressions from the Canning Stock Route Author & Photographer: Rod Orr

What fantastic country. This image shows the **Desert Oaks** (***Allocasuarina decaisneana***) These trees are characteristic inhabitants of sandhills in much of Central Australia - aren't they beautiful? The photo below shows the surprising difference in the form of growth of mature and immature Desert Oaks. The cylindrical plants on the right are juvenile Desert Oaks - they are even stranger when they are very young seedlings - just a very prickly tangle of slender branches which looks more like a strange shrub than a tree.

The prickliness is possibly an adaptation to browsing pressures from native animals - they are so sharp that even camels seem to leave the seedlings and juvenile Desert Oaks alone. The sharpness is actually from the tips of the tiny leaves which surround the joints between the sections of the slender stems of the plant - these stems are easily mistaken for leaves unless you look carefully, preferably under magnification, but then it all becomes clearer.

We saw very little of the fauna of the areas that the CSR passed through - much of it is nocturnal and we were tired enough to sleep at night instead of searching for the locals.
This is one of the Toadhoppers - *Buforania rufa* - the Rufous Toadhopper, in its preferred habitat amongst rocks (with which it shares its colour)

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings
Wednesday September 9 7.30pm
Eric Wilkinson: Geology and vegetation of the Bendigo area. Annual General Meeting.

Excursions
Saturday 12 September 9am - 1 pm
Great Dividing Trail Flora and Fauna Mapping. This will be a half day excursion. Meet at the clubrooms. We will be doing a section of the GDT between Shelton's Rd and Diamond Hill Rd. Bring binoculars, notebook GPS, camera, morning tea. Contact: Anne Bridley 54493479.

Fauna Group
This group normally meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. New and seasoned Club members are most welcome to attend.

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

2009 Kooyoora Wildflower Show
18th – 20th September
Rheola Hall.

ANGAIR Annual Wildflower Show 2009
Anglesea, Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna
September 19 and 20
Memorial Hall Anglesea ph. 5263 1085

Friends of Brisbane Ranges Biennial Wildflower Show
Sunday 11 October, from 10am
Anakie Hall, Staughtonvale Rd, Anakie 3221
Contact Judy Locke 5367 2922 or
Helena Lindorff helenal@pacific.net.au

SEANA Spring Camp – Advance Notice
Friday 2nd - Sunday October 4th 2009
Grampians Retreat & Field Studies Centre
Host: Hamilton Field Naturalists Club
Deposit $100 per person due 31st August
contact: Diane Luhrs 55 723 874 or Reto Zollinger AH 55 712 544
PO Box 591, Hamilton 3300
email: hamiltonfnc@live.com.au

Sunday 20 September - Fryers Ridge Nature Conservation Reserve
Friends of The Box-Ironbark Forests (Mt Alexander Region) Bushwalk
Range of native plants, creekline vegetation, interesting rocks in the bushland behind Taradale. c. 8 km.
Meet 9.30am outside 30 Templeton St Castlemaine and carpool to the start of the walk. Bring water, morning tea and lunch. Walks normally finish mid afternoon. Non-members welcome. No cost.
Information Barbara Johnson 5423 2773.

Did you know that 7-13 September is Weedbuster Week ? For details, go to www.weedbusters.info